

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 AID-05 A-01 OPR-02

SY-05 /090 W

----- 011459

R 231616Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0722

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L FINAL SECTION OF TWO OUAGADOUGOU 3195

4. ALL KINDS OF WILD RUMORS ARE PRESENTLY CIRCULATING IN OUAGADOUGOU. GARANGO AND DAKOURE ARE SAID TO HAVE FLED TO FRANCE. MAURICE YAMEOGO, THE FORMER PRESIDENT OUSTED IN 1966, IS REPORTED TO BE BACK IN OUAGADOUGOU AGITATING AMONG THE FORMER POLITICANS. THE MORO NABA, TRADITIONAL EMPEROR OF THE MOSSIS, IS SAID TO HAVE CALLED A MEETING OF MOSSI CHIEFS IN ORDER TO AGREE ON A STRATEGY FOR THE MOSSI COMMUNITY IN THE EVENT OF POLITICAL TROUBLES. WE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO SUBSTANTIATE ANY OF THESE RUMORS ALTHOUGH, AS FAR AS DAKOURE IS CONCERNED, WE EXPECT THAT HE IS PRESENTLY ATTENDING A CILSS MEETING IN NOUAKCHOTT. WHAT SEEMS TO BE REASONABLY CERTAIN IS THAT THE TRADE UNIONS HAVE TENTATIVELY SET THE DATE OF JANUARY 5 FOR THE BEGINNING OF THEIR UNLIMITED GENERAL STRIKE AND THAT PRESIDENT LAMIZANA HAS ASKED TO SEE THE TRADE UNION LEADERS ON DECEMBER 26, PRESUMABLY IN AN ATTEMPT TO DISSUADE THEM FROM PROCEEDING WITH THEIR PLANS. AT THIS STAGE, IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT HE WILL SUCCEED.

5. THE IRONY OF THE PRESENT SITUATION IS THAT THE SOCIAL
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AGITATION IS NOT DIRECTED AT LAMIZANA HIMSELF. MOST PEOPLE

AGREE THAT LAMIZANA'S RULE HAS BEEN MILD AND HUMANE. NOBODY IS PRESENTLY IN JAIL IN UPPER VOLTA FOR POLITICAL REASONS WHICH IS MORE THAN BE SAID FOR MOST NEIGHBORING AFRICAN COUNTRIES. THERE ARE FREE TRADE UNIONS IN UPPER VOLTA WHICH CAN EFFECTIVELY MAKE THEIR VIEWS KNOWN, AS WAS AMPLY DEMONSTRATED LAST WEEK. AN INDEPENDENT PRESS (SUCH AS IT IS) DOES EXIST AND IS TOLERATED BY THE MILITARY REGIME. THE OLD DISCREDITED POLITICIANS, INCLUDING FORMER PRESIDENT YAMEOGO, ARE ALL FREE AND MOST OF THEM HAVE BECOME RELATIVELY WEALTHY BUSINESSMEN. IT IS LIKELY THAT, IN THE FUTURE, LAMIZANA'S PRESIDENCY WILL BE REMEMBERED WITH SOME FONDNESS AND PROBABLY REGRETS.

6. THE TRADE UNIONS HAVE NOW PLACED LAMIZANA IN A DILEMMA. HE COULD, OF COURSE, RESHUFFLE HIS GOVERNMENT IN A MANNER WHICH WOULD GIVE SOME SATISFACTION TO THE TRADE UNIONS BUT THIS WOULD RESULT IN FURTHER LOSS OF FACE FOR THE MILITARY REGIME. IF THE LABOR UNIONS GO AHEAD WITH THEIR GENERAL STRIKE IN JANUARY, AS IS LIKELY, THE PRESIDENT COULD, OF COURSE, CALL IN THE ARMY IF THE SITUATION BECOMES TOO CHAOTIC AND HE COULD USE IT TO BREAK UP ANY DEMONSTRATIONS. THERE ARE MANY ARMY OFFICERS WHO WILL RECOMMEND SUCH A COURSE OF ACTION, BUT IT IS NOT IN KEEPING WITH LAMIZANA'S CHARACTER AND SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT HE WOULD PREFER TO RESIGN RATHER THAN USE THE ARMY AGAINST THE STRIKERS. ON THE OTHER HAND, RESIGNING UNDER SUCH CONDITIONS WOULD BE DISTASTEFUL TO LAMIZANA WHO HAD HOPED TO GO INTO RETIREMENT AS AN ELDER STATESMAN STILL ENJOYING THE RESPECT AND AFFECTION OF THE PEOPLE OF UPPER VOLTA. MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT IF LAMIZANA RESIGNS UNDER SUCH CONDITIONS, THE MILITARY OFFICERS PRESENTLY IN THE GOVERNMENT WILL NOT HAVE MUCH OF A CHANCE, AND SOME RELATIVELY UNKNOWN SENIOR ARMY OFFICER IN EFFECTIVE COMMAND OF TROOPS IS MORE LIKELY TO TAKE OVER.

7. PERHAPS THE SCHEDULED GENERAL STRIKE WILL PASS, AS DID THE FIRST ONE, WITHOUT INCIDENTS. EVEN DURING THE FIRST STRIKE, THERE WERE GRUMBLINGS AMONG STRIKERS ON THE SECOND DAY BECAUSE THEY COULD NOT GET FOOD FOR THEIR FAMILIES. IF THE STRIKE LASTS LONGER THAN THREE OR FOUR DAYS, IT IS POSSIBLE
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THAT MARKET WOMEN WILL SLOWLY START SELLING AGAIN IN THE MARKET, STORES WILL BEGIN TO OPEN AND THE STRIKE WILL PETER OUT. PRESUMABLY TRADE-UNION LEADERS ARE AWARE OF THIS POSSIBILITY. IN THAT CASE, LAMIZANA COULD PERHAPS WEATHER THE STORM UNTIL A SUCCESSOR HAS BEEN FOUND. WHATEVER HAPPENS, 1976 IS LIKELY TO BRING ABOUT SOME IMPORTANT CHANGES IN UPPER VOLTA'S INTERNAL POLITICS.
GRAHAM

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL STABILITY, GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW, EXILES, POLITICAL LEADERS, POLITICAL SUMMARIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 DEC 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: greeneet
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975OUAGAD03195
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: DG ALTERED
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750445-1108
From: OUAGADOUGOU
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751215/aaaaamxs.tel
Line Count: 115
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <29 MAY 2003 by WorrelSW>; APPROVED <12 DEC 2003 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POLITICAL STABILITY IN UPPER VOLTA
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PINS, UV, (GARANGO, TIEMOKO MARC), (DAKOURE, ANTOINE), (YAMEOGO, MAURICE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006